



Department of Pesticide Regulation



Paul E. Helliker
Director

Gray Davis
Governor
Winston H. Hickox
Secretary, California
Environmental
Protection Agency

June 22, 2001

WHS 01-02

TO: County Agricultural Commissioners

SUBJECT: PHYSICIAN CONSULTATION ON PESTICIDE-RELATED ISSUES AND
WH&S BRANCH ASSISTANCE ON EPISODE INVESTIGATIONS

The Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) Worker Health and Safety (WH&S) Branch scientists provide technical assistance each year to several county agricultural commissioners (CACs) on pesticide-related illness or injury investigations. In addition, a licensed physician working under contract for the WH&S Branch provides support to CACs and healthcare providers during investigations and complaints. These services include responding to pesticide-related health questions from the persons exposed to pesticides, responding to inquiries from physicians treating patients, recommending or coordinating urine and blood sample collection with hospital and clinical personnel, and assisting CAC investigators in interviewing persons who may have been exposed to pesticides. Although these services are limited, many of you may be unaware of the licensed physician that is available to provide such services.

Physician Consultation and Services

Dr. Michael O'Malley, under contract with the University of California Davis, is usually available each Thursday in the WH&S Branch office, and on-call during the rest of the week during business hours to assist CACs and healthcare providers in responding to medical and health-related inquiries. The WH&S Branch prioritized the following tasks covered by Dr. O'Malley:

First Priority Level

1. *Assist in triage during investigations of pesticide-related episodes.* This includes consulting with physicians and medical personnel to assist them in diagnosing pesticide-related illnesses or injuries, consulting with medical personnel regarding urine and blood sample collection, conducting on-site interviews of persons who may have been exposed to pesticides, and conducting limited medical examinations.
2. *Assist in post-triage and follow-up to inquiries from healthcare providers.* This includes responding to inquiries from physicians and other healthcare providers who are conducting follow-up visits of patients who continue to exhibit pesticide-related illness or injury symptoms. This also includes responding to inquiries from physicians and other healthcare providers who need assistance in diagnosing or treating patients post-triage, and generally after the investigation has been initiated.

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Second Priority Level

1. Consult with CAC staff on medical findings of pesticide episode investigations, including review of medical records.
2. In coordination with OEHHA, give presentations on the Pesticide Illness Surveillance Program and provide medical education materials to community physicians, clinics, or other community groups.
3. Testify as an expert medical witness during legal proceedings carried out by CAC.

Due to limited resources in the WH&S Branch, CAC staff should follow the procedures listed below to request Dr. O'Malley's services.

1. CAC staff should contact one of the listed WH&S Branch scientists and provide information about the request. These scientists will screen the request to determine the priority level and whether it requires immediate attention, or further research.
 - Sue Edmiston, Senior Environmental Research Scientist and Supervisor of the Pesticide Illness Surveillance Program (PISP). Telephone Number: (916) 445-4278.
 - Dr. Louise Mehler, Associate Toxicologist in the PISP.
Telephone Number: (916) 445-4190.
 - Dr. Marylou Verder-Carlos, Associate Toxicologist in the PISP.
Telephone Number: (916) 324-4204.
2. First Priority Level requests will be processed immediately. The WH&S Branch scientist will contact Dr. O'Malley and provide him with the information to respond to the CAC request. Note: The WH&S Branch may not get involved in all investigations requested by the CAC, depending on the circumstances of the case.
3. Second Priority Level requests will be coordinated with Dr. O'Malley to determine whether the Branch can provide the service under his contract. The county will be notified whether this service will be provided.

Telephone Inquiries from the Public

WH&S Branch scientists and Dr. O'Malley can respond to a limited number of telephone inquiries from the public regarding health effects resulting from pesticide exposure. If a person contacts the CAC asking these types of questions, contact one of the scientists listed above. The WH&S Branch scientists will research the matter and make a decision whether they can respond to the person's inquiry, or refer them to other sources of information.

Assistance by WH&S Branch Scientists on Pesticide-related Illness/Injury Investigations

WH&S Branch scientists provide technical assistance to CACs each year on a number of illness or injury investigations. The WH&S Branch scientists collect dislodgeable foliar residue samples to determine whether workers were exposed to pesticide residues, and whether it is safe to enter the contaminated area. In addition, scientists coordinate the collection of clothing, urine and blood samples to determine whether workers were exposed to pesticides. The WH&S Branch provides laboratory support for urine and clothing sample analysis through the California Department of Food and Agriculture. On occasion, scientists will assist the CAC investigators in interviewing persons who may have been exposed to pesticides.

If you need assistance from the WH&S Branch on a pesticide-related illness or injury investigation, please contact Janet Spencer, Associate Environmental Research Scientist, at (916) 445-4198.

If you have any questions about the services available from the WH&S Branch, please contact Sue Edmiston from my staff at (916) 445-4278.

Sincerely,

[Original signed by C. Andrews]

Charles M. Andrews, Chief
Worker Health and Safety Branch
(916) 445-4222

cc: Mr. Daniel J. Merkley, Agricultural Commissioner Liaison
Mr. Scott Paulsen, Chief, Enforcement Branch
Dr. Michael O'Malley, Senior Medical Coordinator
Ms. Sue Edmiston
Dr. Louise Mehler
Dr. Marylou Verder-Carlos
Ms. Janet Spencer